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UNH Media Relations

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Media Relations

December 5, 2012

UNH Professor Elected American Folklore Society Fellow

DURHAM, N.H. – Burt Feintuch, professor of English and director of the University of New Hampshire Center for the Humanities, has been elected to the Fellows of the American Folklore Society.

The Fellows is an honorary body that recognizes outstanding achievement in folklore studies. Founded in 1888 in Cambridge, Mass., the society is an association of people who study and communicate knowledge about folklore throughout the world. Feintuch was formally recognized for this honor at the American Folklore Society annual meeting in New Orleans in October.

“Like many folklorists, I start with the assumption that every community shapes deeply felt values and strongly held convictions into aesthetic form. Folklorists study those ‘collective exercises in creative meaning-making.’ Much of what humans are, much of what we think of ourselves, and many of the ways in which we live together can be illuminated by the study of folklore, and ultimately my goal is to have students see the world as a remarkably diverse place, enlivened and illuminated by the traditions and practices we study,” Feintuch said.

Feintuch is the author of *“In the Blood: Cape Breton Conversations on Culture,”* *“Eight Words for the Study of Expressive Culture,”* and co-editor of *“The Encyclopedia of New England Culture.”* He is a former editor of the *Journal of American Folklore*.

In his most recent book, Feintuch presents interviews with Cape Bretoners representing a wide range of cultural engagement — a set of conversations about culture in a place where public discourse has focused on the idea of culture as an engine to pull the island out of its economic doldrums. According to Feintuch, Cape Breton is striking in many ways.

“There's a very strong sense of shared identity, derived from histories that most people know. There's a deep affection for place -- everyone I talked to loves being home. There's a very high degree of what the writer Robert D. Kaplan calls ‘community-mindedness.’ There are deep economic challenges that have led to a need for a kind of creativity and flexibility. While I don't know that these things cause the cultural richness and artistic production, I think they're important factors, and I think that much of the art in Cape Breton, ranging from the traditional music to the remarkable literary creation, reflects those factors,” Feintuch says.

Also a folk musician, Feintuch has produced several recordings of Cape Breton music, including *“The Heart of Cape Breton”* from Smithsonian Folkways. He plays the fiddle with Old Favorite and with the Lamprey River Band in New Hampshire's Seacoast region.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 12,200 undergraduate and 2,300 graduate students.

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